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TESTIMONY RE: S. B. No. 171 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LICENSED
PRACTICAL NURSE PROGRAM.

LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2010

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut. I am Dr. Mary Jane Williams, current chairperson of Government Relations Committee for the Connecticut Nurses Association and professor and chair of nursing at the University of Hartford. I have practiced nursing for over 40 years and have been educating nurses in Connecticut in both the public and private sector for over 35 years. I am also President of the Nursing Career Center of Connecticut and in that role I spent the spring of 2008 visiting all of the state licensed practical nurse programs to discuss career mobility after graduation. I was deeply impressed by the caliber of students in each of these programs and their commitment to the profession of nursing. As a consultant to the state program, I have been impressed with the core curriculum and the expertise of the faculty in providing excellence in education and practice

It should be noted that over a decade has passed since the current nursing shortage began, and there is not an end in sight. The leading researchers in the field predict that the shortage is only going to get worse, unless some drastic changes are made.

The Future of the Nursing Workforce in the United States: Data, Trends and Implications, by Peter Buerhaus, RN, Ph.D., Douglas Staiger, Ph.D., and David Auerbach, Ph.D, forecasts a significant spike in the looming crisis. One of the reasons for the increasing shortage is that, as the current nurse workforce ages, a growing proportion of those nurses will begin to retire, with a sharp increase around the year 2015. The profession is old and getting older.

It is estimated that the nursing workforce will grow at an annual rate of two to three percent, but that won't be nearly enough to counteract the effect of the increased retirements. Add in a growing demand for nurses for an aging general population that needs more care and the shortage of nursing faculty over the last few years, and the deficit will really swell. "The supply is just going to stop growing for about a decade or more," Staiger predicted, which will have far-reaching consequences especially in Connecticut

"That means that access to care is going to be very dependent on the availability of nurses," Buerhaus said. **"Not just in hospitals but in doctors' offices and nursing homes and a multitude of other provider settings.** You name it, access will be affected, and the quality of care and the safety of care will certainly be affected."

The closure of the state technical high school programs will have a major effect on community and long term care settings. The LPN plays a major role in the provision of care in these specific settings. Their loss coupled with the increasing shortage of registered nurses puts populations at risk. The current LPN graduate from the state system also has the ability to move into ADN programs for RN's because of the new revised curriculum that provides academic credit for the courses in their current programs. This innovation allows the graduate to pursue the RN and move into higher education. The elimination of the technical programs is a disservice to the constituents of the state and a potential threat to the health of the public.

It is strongly recommended that the current technical programs become part of the State Community College System. This would provide students with an expanded resource to

finance education and a defined career path via mobility into Associate Degree Programs if qualified. The Connecticut Nurses Association supports the mobility of Nurses from entry through advanced education.